

South Carolina **AMBER ALERT**

A Partnership of Law Enforcement & Broadcasting

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 13, 2006

The United States Department of Justice has proclaimed today as National AMBER Alert Awareness Day, which marks ten (10) years since the abduction and murder of Amber Hagerman, in Arlington Texas.

South Carolina's AMBER Alert program was implemented in 2002, and is a voluntary partnership of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children; Broadcasters; and representatives from the SC Department of Transportation, the SC Department of Public Safety, the SC Law Enforcement Division, the SC Emergency Management Division, the SC Department of Social Services, SC Education Lottery and the National Weather Service. Criteria for activation is that the child is 17 years old or younger and that the agency believes the child is in immediate danger of serious bodily harm or death; the individual is 18 years of age or older and is believed to be at risk for immediate danger of serious bodily harm or death due to a proven physical or mental disability; all possibilities for the victim's disappearance have been reasonably excluded; and there is sufficient information available to disseminate to the public that could assist in locating the victim, suspect or vehicle used in the abduction.

AMBER Alert is a proven success and has helped rescue more than 200 children nationwide. More than 80 percent of those recoveries have occurred since AMBER Alert became a nationally coordinated effort in 2002.

Prevention tips for Parents:

Teach your children to run away from danger, never towards it. Danger is anyone or anything that invades their personal space. Teach them to yell loudly. Their safety is more important than being polite. Teach your children that if they are ever followed in a car to turn around and run in the other direction to you or a trusted adult.

Never let your children go places alone, and always supervise your young children or make sure there is a trusted adult present to supervise them if you cannot. Make sure your older children always take a friend when they go somewhere.

Know where and with whom your children are at all times. Remind children never to take anything or respond in any way if approached by someone they don't know. Teach them to run away as quickly as they can to you or a trusted adult.

Talk openly to your children about safety and encourage them to tell you or a trusted adult if anyone or anything makes them feel frightened, confused, or uncomfortable. Discuss security issues with your children so that they will understand the need for precautions. Advise your older children about steps they can take to help safeguard themselves. Know your children's friends and their families. Pay attention to your children and listen to them. If you don't, there's always someone else who will.

Practice what you teach by creating "what if" scenarios with your children to make sure they understand the safety message and can use it in a real situation.

Consider installing an alarm system in your home with a monitoring feature. Make sure your home is secured with deadbolt locks, and ensure that landscaping around it doesn't provide places for people to hide.

To learn more about the AMBER Alert program, you may call Glenda Booth, 803/737-9000, Amber Alert Coordinator for the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division or check SLED's website www.sled.sc.us; or the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's website at www.missingkids.com.